SOOBOONAGAM AMMAL.

…ED AT M. E. PRESS, MADRAS.

SOOBOONAGAM AMMAL

OR

"Jesus, I my cross have taken
All to leave and follow Thee."

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN Mrs. Mary C. Ninde, whose recent visit to India was made a blessing to many a missionary, attended the Central Conference held at Poona in March last, she urged Miss Grace Stephens to write an account of Sooboonagam Ammal's conversion, and placed the printing the book in my hands.

A few words about Miss Stephens and her work may interest, and possibly enable the reader to understand more clearly how through human agencies such a wonderful rescue from the terrible bondage of idolatry could have been brought about.

Miss Grace Stephens was among the very first whom Bishop Taylor received into full membership when he organized the Methodist Episcopal Church in Madras. Could he then have looked into the future he would have seen the unostentatious, youthful Sunday School teacher lead and develop a mission work so many-sided, so far-reaching, so substantial, and, at times, so startling in its results that if it were the only mission work in the East, it alone would make it easy to see that the Gospel has in it the power to overturn the kingdom of idolatry.

Her faith has wrought the righteousness of Christ in hearts so far removed from the knowledge of the true God, that their conversion would have been thought a thing impossible by a faith less mighty than that possessed by Miss Stephens. Through her instrumentality the Hindu editor, first idolator, then atheist, was transformed into the earnest, eloquent preacher of the Gospel ; the astrologer and magician burned his books and now declares the truth as it is in Jesus ; the priest who for more than a quarter of a century was worshipped as a god, now cries to his once deluded followers, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." In India there are thousands of Brahminical castes. While from the highest of these God has given her fruit, He has also enabled her to lift up the lowest of

the low. For example, she took into her home a living boy skeleton of the most degraded class and tenderly cared for him until now he is a teacher of two schools which he carved out of raw heathenism, and in addition is an evangelist of the best type. In her work have come to pass the words of Mary, "He hath put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree."

Her general work comprises systematic visiting and teaching of more than five hundred zenana women ; nine day-schools with nearly six hundred pupils ; nine Sunday Schools ; a girls' orphanage, and the Christian workers' home ; the unsparing and extensive circulation of tracts ; the editing of the "Tamil Woman's Friend", "Mather Mithri" ; an extensive correspondence ; and a constant round of responsibilities in connection with the inter-denominational work of Madras.

To those who cannot find time to work in the Sunday School, it is worth telling that Miss Stephens keeps her place as a teacher in the English Sunday School at Vepery, is at the head of her class every Sunday, even as when she first received her certificate of full membership from the Rev. William Taylor.

To develop this kind of work requires gifts as well as grace. Miss Stephens has both. In her is united an

uncommon amount of common sense, executive ability of a high order, and deep piety. Her widowed sister, Mrs. Jones, is her first assistant, and is also a woman of rare excellence. Miss Stephens is a keen reader of human nature, which accounts for the wise, efficient, and pious company of helpers engaged in her many-sided work.

Miss Stephens has written the story of Sooboonagam Ammal's conversion, but she has written more : the reader will find in the following pages an insight into Hindu high life such as he will rarely get in any other book.

As to Sooboonagam Ammal personally, I believe the ladies in America would, if they could meet her, pronounce her an Indian "Esther," physically, intellectually and spiritually.

A. W. RUDISILL.

MADRAS, *September 21st, 1896.*

MISS GRACE STEPHENS.

ENGRAVED AT M. E. PRESS, MADRAS.

CHAPTER I.

Glimpses of Brahmanism.

SOOBOONAGAM AMMAL at the age of eighteen was steeped in heathen darkness and superstition.

She was a strict Brahman, and from the day of her birth had all the rites of her sect performed for her, and in the seclusion of her ancestral home, amid all its wealth and luxury, she was devoted to her gods. At her birth the

astrologers were consulted, who, doubtless, said that she was born under a "lucky star," and that she would have a large family and a happy home; while forty days after, special feasting and ceremonies were observed. She was named Sooboonagam for the "Wisdom god," "Subramanium," and "Nagam," signifying "serpent" or "cobra," the worship of which is closely connected with this god.

Sobooonagam Ammal was a Brahman. Brahman! Those who know the significance of this word here in India will understand how lofty is the isolation of this people, and how they are counted as the "Lords of their Religion."

Brahman! Dare we cross the threshold of their homes! Dare we come in contact with them as with other people! For us to touch these Brahman women means to them pollution, defilement, and contamination! One who had just performed her "poojahs" or

prayers, said with a proud, haughty look, "If the Queen of England comes now to my house she cannot touch me, for she eats flesh!"

Never shall I forget the lessons I learned in my early days of mission work here in Madras. After many weeks and months of hard toil and labor, the inmates of a Brahman house learned to love us; and we grew to be so intimate, that we were allowed to sit in the small room at the outer threshold of their house, while our pupil sat within!! In order to give the lesson, books had to be thrown to each other! No touching, no taking the book from us in any way! After a time the old bald-headed mother began to look upon us with some complacency, and sometimes gave us a smile of welcome. One day to my great surprise, she pushed toward me in a tray on the floor, some fruit, for she dared not give it to me with her hands! She said she had, her-

self, raised it in her own garden that she might have the satisfaction of giving it to me. I knew that the most of our Hindu women are pleased when we accept and eat anything they give us; so thinking it would be the same in this case I put the fruit to my mouth. Immediately there were storms of indignation; she drove me away, asking me how I dared put anything to my lips in the house of a Brahman! *They* never ate like that; *they* break their food, and throw it piece by piece into their mouths, not allowing their hands to touch their lips!

I learned some severe lessons in those days at some of the strict Brahman houses. We had to be careful how we held our very books and fans! Their vessels and their cooking places we could never see because they are so sacred they must be kept from the defiling look!

If we meet a Brahman woman on the street she draws herself away from us; or if a Brah-

man lady condescends to attend our "Zenana Party" she must afterwards resort to almost continuous bathing to wash away the pollution! One woman who never touched us in her house, and who did come to one of our zenana gatherings in my home, said that when she returned to her home, she had to sit in water all that night, and did not taste food for many hours!

Among our more than five hundred zenana women, there was one Brahman lady very desirous of seeing in what sort of place we live. After our many invitations and her many promises, she at last came; but having come, nothing could induce her to enter the house; she stood out in the compound or garden, and from a distance looked into this door, and into that window! And now, just think of *our* having a Brahman eating, drinking, and living in our home!

A "*Pantulu*" Brahman is stricter by far

than those of the other sects. I have heard it said by a very orthodox "Iyengar" Brahman that his sect is only allowed to *recite* the Vedas, while the "Puntulus" not only recite, but "propound and interpret them, and perform the ceremonies they enjoin." "In fact," he said, "they are the *Hindu* Missionaries, and altogether the priestly class." To this strict sect belongs Sooboonagam Ammal. Her father, Mr. A. L. Ventkataramana Pantulu, M.A., B.L., was the first to take a double degree in the University of Madras. The "Daily Post" which reported our Sooboonagam's conversion says of him:—"He was high up in Government service. He was one of the Examiners of the University. At the time of his death he held the position of Sub-judge in the District of Madura. He was a leading citizen, and enjoyed the friendship and confidence of eminent Europeans and Hindus." It is stated by many that he was one of "un-

equalled intelligence and ability," and the only native gentleman at that time who held that position. He enjoyed a fine reputation, possessed great wealth, and wielded a powerful influence; and while as a Brahman he could not partake of food with Europeans, nor entertain them under his own roof, yet he often rented halls and other places and provided banquets for the Honorable Members of Council. The papers expressed astonishment that "the daughter of such a cultured man embraced Christianity." But the father with all his education was an idolater. He was noted for his charity; and to-day there stands in Bangalore an immense "Chuthrum" or inn, which he built, and which feeds and sustains hundreds of poor people. A temple is also attached to this building. A Hindu describing him, said, "He was like a tiger, he was so powerful and clever;" another, "When he made his speeches at the High

Court, all the English barristers were forced to sit down to listen to him." Sooboonagam Ammal loves and cherishes the memory of her father, and often says she "must be as clever as he was."

CHAPTER II.

Touches of Early Days.

SOOBOONAGAM AMMAL was brought up in the seclusion of the zenana, and was taught to live an idolatrous life. She was the youngest and most petted child in the house; her every wish was gratified; her jewels and silk cloths were of the very best, and until she came to us she always wore silk, because with all high-caste, wealthy Brahmans, cotton is defilement to the body. She often speaks with regret of the fabulous prices paid

for these jewels and cloths because they came from temples and other sacred places.

When she was very young and her father was at Bellary, she was sent to a Mission School for a year. She says she remembers how the story of Jesus touched her young heart. Those were the only school days she ever knew ; though as many say " she inherits her father's mental abilities," she, somehow in her home, learned to read and write Telugu, and to speak Canarese.

At the age of ten years she was married. An earlier marriage was often spoken of as she had a number of suitors who were men of position and wealth, some connected with rajahs and dewans ; but the one selected for her was not well educated, had little or nothing in his favor, had no employment, and was supported by the family ; but as he was the nearest marriageable *relative*, according to the rules of their society, she was given to

him. Just before the marriage her father died leaving Sooboonagam "her portion." At her wedding ten thousand rupees were spent. She says that they had a grand show, very distinguished people were present, and she received gifts of jewels, cloths, and vessels, worth quite a fortune. She enjoyed it all very much, and as a child was very happy. It was at this time, "Ammal" signifying "Madam" was added to her name.

As is the custom with Hindu wives she divided her time between her mother's and her husband's homes, and it was at the former place when she was between sixteen and seventeen years of age that we first met her.

She was always of a very religious turn of mind. From her earliest days there was no ceremony in which she did not take part. She went with the family to eight sacred rivers besides bathing many times in the sea. She visited fifty temples, and the bread she ate was

from the temple at Triplicane. Her family is a very religious one, but she was considered the most zealous of them all. At one time she fasted for forty days to appease the gods and have peace in her home. She took nothing at this time but milk to keep body and soul together.

On another occasion in order to perform a ceremony very rigidly, she fasted for twenty-five days, and went every evening to the sea at Cassimode to bathe and so purify herself. During those days of fasting she performed penances with every ceremony. She used to go around a certain sacred tree forty-two times very early every morning, and at each circuit made an offering to the shrine attached to the holy tree. Not satisfied with this she joined her mother in taking upon herself the seal of the priests. This is very seldom done by young women; but her mother as a token of being wholly devoted to the gods, and that

she was to live a very sacred life had the seal imbedded in the flesh of her own arm. The priests refused to do this for Sooboonagam Ammal notwithstanding her entreaties and the large sum of money she paid them. However, instead of sealing her on the arm they gave her a sacred powder always to be worn upon her person.

After receiving this seal her ambition rose higher. She was so devoted that nothing would satisfy her but the building of a temple! And now at Kodambakam, near Madras, where our Mission has lately commenced work, stands a temple, the monument of Sooboonagam Ammal's idolatry and devotion. She visited this place weekly, and at times spent several days there. During those days the people say her expenditure in charity was very great, and that she gave of her abundance to feed and sustain people connected with the temple. Her mother donated the idol, and

Sooboonagam decorated it with some of her best jewels. She purchased twenty-five beautiful and expensive handkerchiefs from Benares for its use, and also gave the silver sprinkler for the holy water. While doing this she fasted forty-five days in addition to the many other fasts required by her caste and creed!

Besides the idols of the house, in her own room she had twenty-five pictures of idols, and twelve images, both small and large, and of the very best kind.

As the petted and most holy child in the household, from the age of two years, the privilege of decorating the idols in the house with flowers and preparing everything for worship was given to her. She tells how rigidly those duties were performed, how she cared for those flowers, and drank the sacred water after placing it before the idol. For hours she used to sit before each idol with a wet cloth about her, counting the hundred

beads that were given to her for this sacred office; over each bead a prayer was offered, until the thousand beads were accomplished.

We must not forget to say that Sooboonagam Ammal in her young life outstripped all the other members of her family by performing the ceremony called "The Million Lights," to insure to her a pathway of light when her soul should leave her body. To accomplish this every day she lighted before shrines and idols two or three hundred little oil lamps, and while so doing excluded from her mind everything else, and was in deep meditation upon the Vedas.

Notwithstanding all this gross darkness the "Light of the World," our Jesus, was ready and waiting to receive her and to give her His pathway of light.

CHAPTER III.

Found.

ONE afternoon at our Worker's meeting we were led to pray very earnestly for our dear women, and the workers were exhorted to look for new houses and new women. Chinnamah, my old faithful Bible woman, went forth in the strength of the Lord. A few days after she told us she had found a new house, and a very beautiful woman, who seemed eager to learn Tamil. According to my work rules, she did not take her as a pupil,

nor even promise to teach her. We must see the house and the pupil, and make all the arrangements ourselves. So my sister, Mrs. Jones, an indefatigable zenana worker, and for whose labor in the Mission I continually thank the Father, went with Chinnamah to make the arrangements. The house was that of a Brahman! all the etiquette and requirements had to be observed. The young woman was Sooboonagam Ammal, so beautiful, clothed so richly and decorated with jewels, and eager to learn Tamil. We little knew then her object in desiring to acquire the language. We applauded her ambition though deep down in her heart she had her idols, and there were some prayers in the Vedas and Sastras, also some ceremonies, which if she knew Tamil she could perform! So only to help her in her idolatry, only to yield more homage to her heathen shrines, did she wish to become our pupil! But God had His purposes for her.

The time has passed in our work when we have to hide our true object in teaching the women to read. We had kept from telling them the whole truth; we had taught them needle-work, fancy-work, and other subjects, so that we might gradually take them the Scriptures. Now the study of the Scriptures is required; to be pupils of ours, they must learn the Scriptures from us, and we teach them that they may read the Bible for themselves. It is often a comforting thought to me that if our Mission has not accomplished anything else, it has taught hundreds of women of Madras, in this far-away India, to read the Bible.

So Sooboonagam Ammal was told the conditions on which she could be our pupil. She must take Scripture lessons, and learn to read the Bible. Her mother and people remonstrated, but she told them what her object was, and "as far as the Scripture lessons are

concerned," she said, "they will go in one ear and come out of the other." She was confident in her belief and in her idols; and her people knowing it was only to promote her worship of the gods, consented to her learning, and she was enrolled as a zenana pupil, Mrs. Jones giving her the first Scripture lesson. Though I saw her several times and gave her counsel and advice, yet Mrs. Jones and Chinnamah, the Bible woman who had found her, were her teachers.

What a Brahman house that was! The mother and grand-mother, because of being defiled and contaminated by contact with us Christians would neither sit nor stand in the same room! They were too holy! But through the keyhole, or from behind a screen they peeped and watched the pupil. Generally her sister and other relatives stood in the same room, but at some distance.

At that time she was most zealous in her

devotions and how slow was the work of her teachers! Like every other zenana woman she sometimes took lessons, and sometimes was too much engaged with fasting, prayer, and idol-worship, to put herself out by even looking at them. Sometimes, with all the "marks" on her she would, without a word, wave her hand to them to go away. There were days when she had to keep silence, not a word escaping her lips. On no account would she see any one or take a lesson on Friday, the day always kept sacred for bathing and the gods.

As we think of all this young life and all these things, and see her now in our home, we wonder if she can be the Sooboonagam Ammal of the past. No more fasting days and nights for salvation! No more bathing in seas and rivers to be saved from sinful pollution! No more the visiting of temples, nor the drinking of holy water! No more the giving of

large sums of money for prayers to the priests and temples! No more the sacred powder and marks of worship on face and arms! No more the lighting of lamps, the penance, and all the rites prescribed by heathen priests! No more the proud, lofty look, the look of disdain and contempt for a Christian! No, more the "touch-me-not" Brahman! But now our Sooboonagam sings most touchingly, "with the spirit and the understanding," "Come to Jesus," Rock of Ages cleft for me," "Nothing but the Blood of Jesus," "Just as I am without one plea," "Jesus, I my cross have taken," and "Abide with me"!

Who wrought this change? Hear her answer, "Only the power and Spirit of God through His Word!"

CHAPTER IV.

AWAKENING.

FOR a year and a half Sooboonagam Ammal says she cared nothing for us, and only pitied the teachers for the trouble they took in visiting her. But gradually she became interested in the Bible lessons, and began to read the Bible for herself. Oh! what a change came! Quietly she grew more interested, and her zeal for idol worship began to flag. The suspicions of her people were aroused as they saw that she read the Bible.

She put them off by saying it was idle curiosity. They watched her life and saw that she was not visiting the temple she had built; there were many things to be finished there; some improvements yet to be made, and jewels to be set; and Sooboonagam Ammal once so zealous now seemed indifferent to all these things, and when urged to go on with them and to give the order she had contemplated of having a golden image of herself in the act of prostration before the idol in her temple, she told them they would have to wait until she received all her money, for God's Word had touched her heart, and, as she says, "The Spirit of God was giving me to know the precious truth." Can we doubt the power of that Word? Can we doubt the power of that "Precious Truth"? Can we withhold it from these women who are groping in darkness, sunken in idolatry, and hating the name of Christian? As long ago God sent to Saul of

Tarsus the humble Ananias, so looking down upon this misguided child in Madras, He sent to her messengers from our Mission home. Through this Mission to how many Sooboonagams has the loving Father sent us to give His message! For this we praise His dear Name.

For the sake of appearance she performed her "poojahs," but her heart was far from them; she neglected her most arduous duties, and when asked the reason would give evasive replies. These did not satisfy the vigilant priests and mother: penances and fasts were ordered, and that her mind might be concentrated on these, she was told to discontinue her lessons with us. This was to Sooboonagam Ammal the great sorrow of her life. The Sun of Righteousness was dawning in her heart, and she wanted to know more about Him, and how could she cease taking lessons? To quiet them and at the same time have her

lessons, she went through all the rites and ceremonies, yet her mother from her key-hole saw the smile of welcome given to the teachers; she saw the earnest look on the face of her daughter as she took her lesson, and now there was no hope for Sooboonagam Ammal.

It was about that time, in November, 1894, she sent me a letter by her teacher, in which she opened her heart to me for the first time. She told how she was situated; that she loved our religion and that her people hated it and insisted on her giving up her lessons; rather than do this she said she was willing to leave all and come to me, and she asked earnestly for our prayers.

Not long after came another letter telling that she was very unhappy, but that in her heart she had given up all idol worship and depended on Jesus alone for salvation! She warned us to be careful, and begged us not to visit her frequently, as she feared we would

be asked by her people to stop altogether and that would make her very miserable.

After that time no regular visits were made to her. When her teachers went they were often told that she was not in the house, or they were driven away in the rudest manner. Yet, somehow, little words and messages came and went, and we prayed much for her as we knew she was undergoing persecution. I felt that she was one of our many women who are suffering for Christ's sake, and that through much suffering she must enter the Kingdom of Heaven. I knew that she had the Word of God, and it was a great comfort that we had both taken it to her and taught her to read it. It became impossible for Sooboonagam to continue the life she was leading. The Spirit was her Teacher, and she felt that she was sinning against God and grieving the Holy Spirit by her evasions, and by hiding her true convictions. She now

recalls with pain the many times she threw the flowers into a dark corner of the room, and made it appear to her people that they were the flowers she had worshipped and presented to the gods.

At one time there was a very important festival observed in her house; many Brahman priests were there and received gifts. There was much feasting, and with great pomp every one in the house had to do homage to one great idol there. Sooboonagam did not know what to do; she asked God to help her, but it seemed as if it were impossible for her to escape the critical eyes of the hundreds about her, and of her mother particularly. She at last thought of a way of escape, and suggested to her mother that as there were so many people in the house, it was very necessary that the chest containing all their jewels and other valuables should be closely watched; and as she was not feeling well, she would sit

by the chest and see that it was not molested. This touched a tender chord with her mother and she was satisfied. After a time to Sooboonagam's great surprise and sorrow her name was called! The priests insisting on her coming, her mother said she would take her place by the chest and that she was to go. How sad she was! She went. But the Heavenly Father looked down upon His tried and tempted child, and provided the promised way of escape. She had crossed the threshold to another room where the idol and the priests were, when lo! a scorpion stung her! The pain was so intolerable that she had to be taken from the room, and there was no idol worship for her that day!

By this singular though painful deliverance, she felt from that time she was to take a bolder stand for Christ.

CHAPTER V.

Decision.

SOOBOONAGAM AMMAL took a bolder stand, but what was the consequence? Arrangements were made to send her away from Madras.

To how many of our dear women has this been done and we see them no more! Will they shine as jewels in the Saviour's crown? We believe that many will, for we do not limit the power of God to save and to keep. We know that because of their evil surroundings,

persecutions, and taunts, many do go back to their idols and their heathenism. We cannot judge them harshly for this, neither can we blame them for the oft-repeated cry, "Take me away, I cannot live as a Christian here!" We too often pronounce the verdict "the women must live as Christians in their homes." We fail to remember how necessary it is to surround our young converts with the best influences; we try to shield them from the evil world by providing the best Christian homes, the best schools, and the best colleges.

Can we do less for our dear zenana women? Their surroundings are evil continually, for they have the darkness of heathenism to contend with; and so for the sake of their everlasting souls, and with the love of Christ burning in their hearts, they desire to leave all and follow Him.

When Sooboonagam Ammal heard that she was to leave Madras her whole heart recoiled.

She well knew what it all meant; she was to be sent to Bangalore to live with her father's younger wife; for he, too, with all his education, had two wives. This woman possesses immense wealth and much property; she has charge of the father's chutrum and temple, and lives a life of extreme extravagance. She was devoted to Sooboonagam, and from her babyhood had petted and favored her, and loaded her with valuable presents; and Sooboo knew that in her home she would be kept like a little princess with every wish gratified. This second mother with all her wealth is given up to her idols; every kind of idolatry is pursued in her spacious grounds and property. Sooboo recalls that one time while there, because she was so zealous, and because it is the custom of very pious Hindu women, she daily, for many days, took her offerings to the cobras (from which she derived her name) and fed them with milk, looking for them at the

temples in holes, and on trees ; the milk being placed near where they were supposed to be.

But now, " choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," she set her face against their arrangements, withstanding all their entreaties ; as she was greatly loved she had her own way. She was, however, always on the alert, for she did not trust her people, and did not know how things would be. She was constantly told she had to go to this or that temple ; with tears in their eyes they would ask her to accompany them ; but that she would be left at one of these places and be shut in for life was her continual dread.

Ah ! I recall now my beautiful Pushpacanti (bright flower), whom I loved and who loved me, and at whose palatial house I had many precious times. We were the first Christians whom her husband allowed to visit his house, and on his death-bed he com-

mitted her to me; but the night after his death she was taken to the large temple at Black Town and left there! I was told she begged that her photograph be given to me, but this was denied. Seven long years have gone by, and I have neither seen nor heard from her. Such might have been the fate of Sooboonagam Ammal!

While matters were in this state with Sooboo Mrs. Jones happened to give her a lesson on the healing of the palsied man, and Christ's words, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk" impressed her so much that she counted the cost and determined to leave all and follow Jesus.

Messages came from her to me but I decided not to put anything on paper, or to commit myself in any way. If she came out to me, it must be of her own accord, and on her own responsibility, I would not help her to leave her house and people.

One evening, in October, 1895, while I was

at Bangalore attending our District Conference, Mrs. Jones and the other lady workers were alone in the house. About half-past seven o'clock a woman brought in a bit of paper addressed to me, on which were the words, "Your child, Sooboonagam Ammal, is standing at your gate, may she come in?" Imagine Mrs. Jones's joy, surprise, and consternation, as well as forebodings of trouble. Sooboonagam was welcomed, and all had a blessed time; she told them that she had risked all and had come to stay; that she had been sent to a relative's house, but that she had paid her servant and the bandy-man (coachman) to bring her to our place. When she learned that I was not at home she said she thought it would be better for the others, were she to wait until my return, and that she would go back and come another time; I was to be her mother and all the others her sisters. When Mrs.

Jones enquired if the servants would not betray her if she returned to her people, she replied, "What cannot money do?" They knew then that the woman servant and coachman were well rewarded. So Sooboonagam Ammal braver than ever, after spending an hour in the home and taking tea with my sister and the young ladies, went back to her house with a greater determination to be a worker in God's vineyard. Oh! how sorry I was for her! We feared we would never see her again, for I realized what a perilous attempt she had made, and if discovered, there would be no hope for her; if the servants divulged her secret visit to us, her life, she said, would be a "living death." But she had wonderful faith in God, and she felt that she was right in going back when I was not present to receive her.

CHAPTER VI.

Flight.

SOOBOONAGAM AMMAL had two female servants who waited only upon her and she had nothing to do for herself. At this time she used these women well for she knew she was in their power; she took firm hold of God, and fearing the women might be led to tell if they saw us at her place, she asked us not to visit her; but she sent us letters by them, they little knowing their contents! In those letters she expressed much confidence in God,

and that for His sake she was willing to leave her family and the mother who bore her. She believed that she would yet confess Him in public, that all the obstacles would be removed, that she would worship God in our church, and *eat with us* at our table! Where was all her Brahmanism? Where her idols, her temples, her priests, her heathen ceremonies?

In one letter she expressed her desire to be a zenana worker! She said she had money and jewels, if she could bring them with her she would support herself and not to be an expense to the Mission, but for fear of suspicion, she was doubtful of being able to get them, and thought she would have to leave all and come to us poor and empty-handed.

So matters continued, and we only occasionally saw her. While writing to us, to secure peace and quiet in the house, and avoid being sent away, she tried to conform to the

rites, ceremonies and rules of the household, but when they desired very much that she should make some additions to the temple, she persistently refused.

At last came the crisis! Sooboonagam Ammal made her preparations, and counted the cost! What days they were to her! That last day in her home! She never speaks of it but with tears in her eyes. She took time to pack her boxes and almirahs or wardrobes. She put away in various places her silk cloths, her jewels, and her own valuable kitchen, eating and drinking vessels, nearly all of which were her wedding dowry, and had her name inscribed on them. She looked at all her father's gifts to her, and put them all away. She sealed some of her most valuable articles and told her mother where she would find them. Some inquiries were made as to why she was so careful; she told them that as they often wanted her to go away from

Madras, and as her guardian was at Poona and might any day return and she leave unexpectedly, her mother would know where to look for her things. Oh! poor mother! Little did you know the tears of agony you would shed, as afterwards you would break the seals and look upon your beloved daughter's possessions! Like every other mother she loved her child, her last child, the one she idolized in her infancy and youth, the "light of her eyes" as she afterwards called her, but Jesus loved Sooboonagam Ammal more than did her mother, and wanted her for His work, and she was willing to follow her Lord and to lay her mother at His feet.

Sooboo tells how on that day she looked at her mother's face for the last time, upon the old grandmother, the aunts, and the sister who was her almost hourly companion. She knew she would never more go to her husband's house. Her sister's little boy, eight years old,

was a great pet and favorite of hers, she loved him and they always ate and slept together; she struggled hard and put him aside that day, for she could not bear to look at his face. She looked at all the old servants for soon she knew that whole household would hate her very name, and become her bitterest enemies. She could not eat that day, her mother became anxious and tempted her with many good things. "The last time," "The last time" kept repeating itself in her ears. They saw she was not herself, and to all their tender inquiries she said she was not well but that she would soon be better.

The evening came, all were busy with their "poojahs" and evening meal. As she was not well, her mother excused her and she was alone in the front hall of the house. Quietly when the stars began to shine, she opened her door and slipt out! Ah! who can describe her feelings? The old house, old associations,

dear ones, all left behind! Perhaps some of my readers have given up home, and country, and crossed the waters, have taken long journeys for Christ and His cause, but have you said "Good bye," "Farewell," with never more a hope of meeting, and if to meet, to meet with curses on a mother's lips, the lips you so love? Oh! you who have done much for Christ, take Sooboonagam Ammal to your hearts. Let her find in you all she gave up for her Lord. Listen to her words, "I went out into the darkness with only the stars above me. It was to me like taking a long journey, and I did not know where or how it was going to be. There was nothing before me, but a voice in my heart told me to run, and I ran. I was so frightened I would not stop to take my breath, but at every step I took I felt as if some one were behind me. The swifter I ran, the swifter seemed the step. If I am caught what will become of me, I thought, but I ran on and

on, and at your gate I stopped. I felt then that if I were caught, I would scream, and you would all run out, and help and protect me. When I stopped I turned around, there was nobody! Then and there I offered a prayer, I told God I might be dragged back on the streets, (about half a mile) on which I ran, I might have to endure persecution, trial, and hardships, but I asked Him to keep me faithful to Him."

CHAPTER VII.

"God's Christmas Gift."

SOOBOONAGAM hastened with all speed, rushed past the peon (watchman), and came almost flying up the stairway into my study. Throwing herself into my arms she exclaimed, "I am come, I am come, *I am God's Christmas Gift to you!*"

Let me tell my readers something of the Mission Home that day. How tired I was! Such a busy Christmas! I returned from the Annual Conference the week before; the prop-

erty business on which I had worked all the year seemed to be a failure, and there were some things I did not understand which were hard to bear. Christmas festivities were at hand,—and it is no light matter to make a happy Christmas for seventy people in the house and ever so many outside of it. To make matters a little worse, I was not feeling well and was obliged to partake freely of medicines to keep going. All the ladies in the house assisted me, and did more, perhaps, than I, but I had my work too. So the gifts were purchased, the packets with the gifts from their patrons made up for the girls, and the teachers, Bible women, and all the others were remembered. We had worked late for some nights. The Christmas tree was shown the night before Christmas and was all that could be desired, being pronounced very beautiful. Father Christmas was here and did his best to give all a good time, and that

night the children were too joyous to sleep. We try to make a happy occasion for them, for at one time in their lives, in their heathen homes, they knew nothing of Christmas and Christmas joys. Christmas morning dawned very early for them, and they were up with their carols and prayers. The church services, both English and Tamil were attended. Then came the Christmas dinner and sweets for all in the home; the children were also allowed to see their relatives and friends, who took full advantage of the day and were constantly in and out of the place. The day was a busy one, but evening came at last. All the young ladies who gave me so generously of their time and help, went to their homes for a little vacation; as some had to leave Madras, Mrs. Jones had gone to the railway station with them. At a little after seven o'clock all were out of the house except the Orphanage Girls and myself. They were having a quiet, good time, and

as I was so tired, I went to my study, I remember well I was hardly able to keep the tears from my eyes, and as I sat at my table the language of my heart was, "Well, this cannot go on much longer, I undertake too much, I must hereafter make other arrangements for Christmas;" but as there were many letters to answer I turned wearily to my work.

At this time of discouragement and weakness came Sooboonagam Ammal. It was with mingled feelings of joy and anxiety that I received her. After addressing me she turned to the peon who had followed her upstairs, and said, "Look peon, I have brought nothing with me." She wore no jewels nor costly cloth; she had selected the two oldest cloths she possessed wearing one about her, while the other served as a covering for her head. She now took from her person the only thing she did bring, and gave it to me. It was the little

metal box containing the sacred powder given by the priests as a sign that she had been sealed by them, and which as has been stated before she had to wear always about her person. In giving me this box with the powder she said she gave up her all—caste, heathenism, idolatry, everything. She was full of faith and love. Though I showed her my affection, yet my thoughts were troubled, she did not know how dark the future looked to me. I knew that her people were well able to spend their thousands to get her back. I was told that it most probably would be, a court case, that being a married woman and of her caste and sect it would most likely go against me. Mrs. Jones and the matron, Mrs. Davids, returned and we had prayers together and committed the case to God.

Sooboonagam Ammal slept peacefully and soundly for the first time away from her people and under my roof that night. But while she

slept all my fearful imaginings were aroused. For not long after she arrived, her people came looking for her, her own two servants being the first. All that night it seemed as if people were at the gate or in the compound or garden. Old dog, "Dash" kept splendid watch. It was a long night; I suffered so much with a heavy cold; I had no sleep nor peace of mind, only trouble seemed before me. I realized what a terrible outcome it would be to our work if by the persuasions of her people she relented and went back to them. Every zenana would be closed and the tale told everywhere. Then if it became a court case, I would have to spend money, and where was that to come from? And if I were charged with the crime of unlawfully detaining a married woman, I must pay the penalty. Mrs. Jones, always so helpful and kind, tried to make me see the bright side, but I did not tell even her all my forebodings. As the

morning dawned, I went again to the Throne of the Father for strength and help. He then spoke to me as no one else can; it was in the words of dear Sooboonagam Ammal:—"I am God's Christmas Gift to you." *His gift*, His loving remembrance of me in the time of weakness. What a gift! He gave as no one else gave—a never-dying, ever-living soul! Then came cheer and comfort, and also the words she had uttered soon after her arrival, "To-day Christ was born to the world and to-day I am born to you." What was all our work for during the past year,—was it not to save souls? Was it not to win souls for Jesus? And where was to be found a soul in greater need of salvation? Where was to be found a more precious jewel than this one so deeply buried in idolatry, superstition and darkness, and so carefully and jealously guarded by caste and sect?

From that moment I took the gift God gave

me. I thanked Him for this soul, this jewel, and told Him that whatever came I would be true to His "gift."

CHAPTER VIII.

SAD SCENES.

THE next day people came and went, but no one asked for Sooboonagam nor attempted to enter the house. The second night passed without any outward disturbance; but the following morning at seven o'clock two policemen, or European inspectors, came with some native gentlemen who insisted on seeing me. Mrs. Jones received them, and I requested that they be shown to my drawing-

room, where I met them and was greeted very cordially. Only one of the native gentlemen who said he was deputed to act for the others came upstairs with the officers.

He is related to Sooboonagam and told in most glowing terms who her father was; his position, his wealth, his influence, his intellect, his standing, and his connection with the government. He spoke of the large portraits of honorable men that hung on the walls of the old house; of Sooboonagam's position in the home, and how she had been cared for, petted, and loved. He described most pathetically the feelings of her mother and of all her relatives and friends. He could not believe that Sooboo would give up all her possessions, and break all her family ties, and become a poor, despised Christian. He, of course, insinuated that there had been undue influence exerted, and that we were unlawfully detaining her; so he requested that he might see

her in the presence of these officers and hear her own words and statements.

I then sought Sooboonagam who was in my room engaged in earnest prayer, and receiving strength from God.

She went with me to the drawing-room; where on seeing her the man took her in his arms as he would a child; he uttered the most endearing terms, he whispered them in her ear, and reminded her of her childhood days. He recalled all the past, and urged her to respect the memory of her father. He spoke of her mother, her husband, and the little boy she loved so much, and promised to do all he could to reinstate her into caste, and to give her more than she had before.

I trembled for Sooboonagam Ammal. To all this she said bravely and firmly, "I cannot go back, I am a Christian." Then he tried to make her confess that we had induced and assisted her to leave her home. She answered

most emphatically, "Before God and these officers as my witnesses, I say that these ladies had nothing to do with my coming away; they gave me the Light and I walked into it."

He told her how poor she had become, that to remain a Christian she would forfeit all her wealth and property. To this she replied, "I have all my treasures in the Bible, and its truths are more to me than all my worldly possessions." The man grew quite vexed, but the inspectors were there to see that justice was done on both sides. He asked her most solemnly if she understood what she had done and what it meant; "Do you know that we, as a family of orthodox Brahmans, will have to perform the funeral ceremony for you? Do you know that your mother will have to perform it? Your husband will light the funeral torch? You will be *dead* to us, *dead* to the mother who bore you, *dead* to all your people, *dead* to the whole Brahman community!" Our

dear Sooboo ! Our hearts bled for her, and were lifted in prayer to God. " Yes," she said, with tears in her large eyes. " I know it—I am *dead* to all, but tell them I yet live, and will tell of Christ's love to my people." Are your hearts, my readers, touched with this same " Christ's love " ? And like this young woman here in India, will you be willing, if need be, to leave all and give all for Christ ?

The officers of the law seemed much affected by the language of Sooboonagam. They turned to her relative, saying, " We have her words and her testimony, and it is a clear case ; " then shaking hands with her, they told me if I had any more trouble I could look to them for help. Disappointment and rage were depicted in the face of this native gentleman as he moved quietly away with the policemen.

We now thought our troubles were over ; but all the week people came and went, some

of whom we saw and others refused to see; we kept within doors, for fear we might possibly be injured by those who constantly stood at the gate.

To our great astonishment about five o'clock in the afternoon of New Year's Day, Sooboonagam's mother, aunt, and the little nephew whom she loved so dearly, came into our compound or grounds, accompanied by a seeming multitude of bold, frightful-looking men.

Mrs. Jones, always brave, went first to meet them. The description she and others gave of this company, made me feel very cowardly and my heart sank. There was no help for it, I must go too, as they insisted on seeing me. We could plainly hear their threats and imprecations all over the house. How I shrank from seeing them, although I went down and among them. Their blasphemy and their angry faces were terrifying, truly "The heathen raged"!

They predicted the downfall of the mission; they threatened to spend thousands to take the case into court. I felt that the "silent tongue" was best, and so only listened. They were all on the verandah, as they knew the law well enough not to enter the house. They wanted to see Sooboonagam Ammal and declared they would not leave the place until they had seen her. Fearing the angry people, I advised her mother to come inside, but the poor mother, as much as she wanted to see her daughter, recoiled from this, because she said we would shut her in and keep her as we had kept her daughter! In the meantime I had sent for the police, but the day being a holiday none were to be found. We then appealed to the generous natures of the angry people, but took the precaution to arrange our servants on one side of the verandah, so that if violence were attempted to Sooboo, or to any of us, they might come to our rescue. Joseph, our

village teacher, was here with a stick in his hand; a servant happened to be cleaning knives near by, and the peon or watchman was bustling all over the place; I smile to think how they were all ready for war!

Where was Sooboonagam? Alone in my room, and bathed in tears, entreating God *for us.* I sought her and found that her first thought was how we could endure such treatment and language. She feared, too, my courage would fail, and I would tell them to take her away! Poor Sooboo! She did not know how strong the Lord had made me for His gift. She pleaded with me not to give her away; she would rather not see them; but as I thought it best she agreed to go down, first praying God to give her only four suitable replies to their questions. Wishing me to hold her hand that she might know me near, I gently refused for I knew it would only irritate those who loved her so much.

Sooboonagam calmly sat in the midst of that angry group, on the chair which Mrs. Jones had kindly placed on the verandah for the mother and which she had so angrily spurned.

Then from among them an old man, a relative of her father, stepped forward. At first he spoke very lovingly, using many pet names; growing warmer, he told in loud tones how tenderly she had been reared; and his one theme was that she was disgracing the name of her father. To this Sooboo replied, "If I went in the bad way, if I lived a bad life, you might say so, but I am on a good way which will bring more honor to my father."

Then the aunt placed the little boy before Sooboo; oh! how she pleaded for him! "He loves you, look at him; since you left he has been fretting for you, has not taken food, but cries for you day and night." Sooboonagam Ammal, without a word, yet with tears in her eyes turned her face from the child.

Then came her mother. How shall I describe that scene? The tears fill my eyes as I recall it. It seemed as if flesh and blood could not endure it; her cries were heart-rending, she called to Sooboonagam as *her* child, and told how her bowels yearned for her. Then she accused her of being hard-hearted and cruel, at the same time beating her breast and beseeching her to return to them. Sooboo's reply was, "My affections are not changed towards you, my mother; I love you now as I always have, but you hate the Jesus I love, and I cannot go back to you." After this some of them told her in most terrible language that we would treat her kindly now, but soon would make her work, and at last she would appear as a beggar at their door and wander about the streets. To this she calmly answered, "I came here to work; if the ladies turn me away, God has given me two hands with which I can work for myself."

They inquired very angrily if she had broken caste, if she had eaten with us. "Yes," she said, "I am a Christian; I am very happy; I cannot worship idols any more; Jesus is the true God." Oh! how they raged! In the vilest language they called her an "outcast" again and again; and yet they still pleaded, promising to build her a new house, that she might, if she desired, live apart from them. They placed before her every worldly attraction, but having given the four answers she had asked of God, she remained silent.

Failing in this they turned to me and asked *how much money* I would take for Sooboo! They told me that her guardian who was at the Poona Congress had both telegraphed and written that they were to give us any sum of money we might name. You see we could have made ourselves rich!

Then the broken-hearted mother called on all the gods to curse her child, and with bitter

cries lamented that instead of finding her at our place, she had not dragged her dead from a well! She entreated the gods to send us every kind of misfortune.

Such now was the fury of her friends that we felt it was quite enough for Sooboonagam and for us, and took her away.

When their clamor had reached its height, the police came, and the people retreated with cries of vengeance, shouting, that if they had Sooboonagam Ammal in their power, they would *cut her in pieces*, and declaring, too, that she acted and answered as she did because we had given her wine and she was drunk!

How like the Day of Pentecost when they were "filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance,"—so that some looking on and listening were amazed, while "others mocking said, 'These men are full of new wine.'"

Although relieved that the day was over, we were very restless all night. There was great sorrow in Sooboo's heart for her mother; she was astounded to see her standing with the others, for she is never seen outside her house, and when going to the temple, it must be after dusk when nobody could see her. She told us too, how frightened she had been, for she recognized among the people two athletes, who by their wonderful strength threw people up into the air and then carried them away, and if they had done this to her she would have been entirely lost to us.

An elderly missionary lady who trembled for the fate of Sooboo in that crowd, sweetly said, "It seems to me that the Lord was truly with you, and restrained the wrath of men." Yes, He was there, praise His Holy Name!

Since her mother had come, Sooboonagam Ammal thought with pain and sorrow of the possibility of a visit from her father's younger

wife. She knew that she would not come with revilings but with sweetest words and entreaties, for with her Sooboo was always the spoiled child. She lived at Bangalore and we thought she would scarcely come such a distance; but one evening, a fortnight after the last scene, brought the dreaded visitor. She greeted us very cordially, but Sooboo absolutely refused to see her, as she felt she could not endure the meeting, and we so informed the lady, inviting her to come again. She begged to "see her once more, to satisfy my eyes," and at this time, as she was to leave Madras the next morning. Again we went to Sooboo and found her in earnest prayer, and although we feared the influence of this woman, yet we reminded her that it was an opportunity to witness for Jesus. "Remember," said she, "I am a *young* Christian, I cannot tell what may happen." We knelt together in prayer, and upon rising from her knees, she said,

"Yes, I will see her though to meet now is to part forever. The Lord is like a strong mountain round about me," Oh! that meeting! They embraced each other with tears and kisses. Who can doubt that our religion has cost Sooboonagam Ammal much? The once proud, petted, wealthy Brahman broke all her alabastar boxes, laid all upon the altar! To her as was written to the Hebrews can we not say, "You took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance"?

Both tried to be brave. At last Sooboo found words to enquire for her own mother, and mentioned each member of her family by name, for she was longing for news from the dear old home of her childhood. The woman could scarcely answer but asked Sooboo if she were happy and if she ever thought of returning home. Sooboo, while giving firm replies, tried to comfort this one so dear to

her with assurances of her continued love and prayers for her and for all the members of the family circle. Before leaving our visitor begged us to be kind to Sooboo, saying, "she was brought up like a flower; she is yours now, she has no one else."

As the carriage rolled away Sooboo said, with sorrow in her eyes and voice, "The last is gone, only you and God now." That evening as I stood alone with her I covenanted with God that with all my insufficiency and unworthiness I would do my best for this, His "Gift" to me.

Some persons suggested that I take her away from Madras, however, I concluded it would be better for her to face all the difficulties at the beginning and to give her people every opportunity of seeing her. So her relatives came and went; one begged me to take her from the city, "for it is hard," said he, "to have her so near and yet know that she does

not belong to us." Then I was besought not to allow her to walk on the streets, as it would be so humiliating to them.

Again they said that "though an outcast her mother still loved and longed for her daughter, and they had come to see if she were happy. Another said, "As long as she is here, she is like a magnet to us, and will always draw us to her." God grant that many through her may be drawn to the feet of Jesus. Sooboonagam Ammal a magnet in our mission *for Him!* Blessed Magnet!

CHAPTER IX.

Baptism.

AFTER fully five weeks we arranged for a public baptism, in order that we might magnify the grace of our Lord Jesus. In all our mission work we have found none so steeped in idolatry as Sooboonagam, and only those who are engaged in zenana work, know how hard it is for any zenana woman to confess Christ.

But Sooboo made a noble confession, and because of her clear testimony her case could

not be dragged into the courts; if she had wavered one instant it would have gone hard with us. Now if she took her stand in a public baptism it would convince her people that we desired to hide nothing from them, and besides if she were baptized openly other women would be encouraged to take the same step.

All Hindus are so deeply imbedded in superstition and caste that some of the low caste people were amazed to learn that she ate everything with us, and expressed their surprise to her. Her reply was, "I am a Christian, I live with Christian ladies, and they think it is right to eat such food, and if it is good enough for them, it is good for me."

After her baptism she witnessed in our home for the first time a distribution of prizes among the five hundred children gathered together, and was deeply impressed with the poor children she saw here. She turned from

the caste girls, and from some of the zenana women who came to see her, and said, "If I can work among these poor children I will be glad"; and now with Mrs. Jones, she is teaching in a low-caste Sunday school, and her one longing is to go to the villages and tell the story of Jesus.

When Sooboonagam Ammal first came that October night and saw our orphanage girls, Mrs. Jones says she shuddered and it seemed as if her flesh fairly crept, but now, my once "touch-me-not," high born Sooboonagam Ammal, loves every low caste girl in the school, and some of her happiest moments are when she is left entirely with them. Caste! she has none! She says she belongs to the "Lord Jesus Caste"! Caste! God forbid that we should encourage such an abomination in our Mission.

On Monday, February 3rd, we had a public baptism in which both the English and Tamil

churches were represented. The former congregation seemed very glad to be present, and the English choir to sing :—

"Ring the bells of heaven ! there is joy to-day,
For the wand'rer now is reconciled ;
Yes, a soul is rescued from her sinful way,
And is born a new, a ransomed child !"

Knowing that all could not attend the Tamil service on Sunday morning at eleven o'clock, the hottest part of the day, we selected a week evening for the service, inviting Christians and Missionaries of other denominations, as well as our own.

Sooboonagam Ammal was much in prayer ; and learned the hymn,

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee,"

and as it fully expressed her feelings, she desired to sing it at her baptism.

When the morning of the baptism arrived the servants were quite excited, telling me it was the talk of the bazaars ; and that some evil-

disposed persons were going to the church to make trouble. Later on a note of warning came from Mr. Raju Naidu, who himself had passed through dreadful scenes when he was converted, stating that this baptism was the theme of conversation at the courts and business houses. During the day a Missionary of another denomination, who has had twenty-three years' experience in India, expressed a fear that I did not know what I was doing, for great crowds were coming and he anticipated trouble. He advised that all the arrangements be canceled, and our friends asked to come to the baptism in my home. I did not think this expedient. He then suggested that the church doors be closed, and this I promised to do as far as possible. In view of these warnings I confess I began to be a little anxious, and called my large family together telling them the circumstances, and in my "upper room" we poured out our hearts in prayer to God. With

prayer came action, and I concluded to take Sooboo at an earlier hour, before the crowds had time to assemble, to the parsonage in the church compound, the home of the Rev. A. W. Rudisill, D.D., agent of the M. E. Publishing House, and pastor of the English church.

Sooboonagam Ammal, the peon, and I set out in the carriage with some trepidation as we anticipated meeting angry people. On the contrary, we were greeted at the parsonage with beautiful palms, and flowers. The good Doctor and his wife had decorated their home to give Sooboo a bright and joyous welcome! How delightful was their kindness; my nerves were well strung, and this unexpected pleasure made me very happy. The warm clasp of her hand, the "God bless you," and "Welcome my sister," were so hearty that large tears rained down Sooboo's face; with "a word in season" the Doctor

told her of the hundreds of Christians in his home-land who would be true to her, and be her friends, if she were true to Christ; then before going into the church he prayed most earnestly for God's blessing on the coming service.

Well, the time arrived, and crowds of Europeans, native Christians, Hindus, and Mohammedans were gathered inside and outside the church, and were at all the doors and windows, so that they could not be closed! Though unasked for, the police were on all sides of the church. My brother, Mr. J. Hewitt Stephens, took his seat beside the principal door, and when the people began to grow boisterous, walked out among them and they were quieted.

The services, with the Presiding Elder, the Rev. A. H. Baker in the chair, were opened by singing, "All hail the power of Jesus' Name," followed with prayer by Mrs. Longhurst Ward

of the London Mission. After a Tamil lyric by my orphanage girls, Miss Dr. Howie of the Free Church of Scotland read a portion of Scripture.

I then presented our candidate for baptism; the ritual being read in Tamil by the pastor of the Tamil congregation, Rev. W. L. King, B.D.

Dr. Rudisill made the English address. And who more suitable than the founder of this work? Eleven years ago, after much correspondence and effort, he induced the ladies of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society at home to make appropriations for beginning work in what are now the Madras and Hyderabad Districts of the South India Conference, of which he was Presiding Elder. His late wife, Mrs. Mary M. Rudisill was the first Superintendent and Treasurer of the work in Madras and I was appointed by them to open the work in the zenanas, of which our Sooboonagam Ammal is one of the many seals

God has so graciously given us during these years. To Him be all the glory!

A second address, in Tamil, was given by Mr. W. Raju Naidu, as a representative of the Tamil Church, and who, being impressed by our work in his house, renounced idolatry, left all for Christ, and was publicly baptized by Dr. Rudisill in 1887.

When Sooboo's part in the service came, and she took her place at the altar, there was a murmur of voices, and it seemed as if the crowd without would break through, as they kept repeating in Tamil, "What! a Brahman lady baptized!" When the baptism was over, Sooboo, with a clear voice, in Tamil, sang her hymn,

> "Jesus, I my cross have taken,
> All to leave and follow Thee."

It was very affecting, as in the stillness of death she sang those words, and there were very few dry eyes in the audience; then

unexpectedly to all, after the hymn, she gave her testimony; with tears rolling down her cheeks she said, "I was a poor sinner. I worshipped idols, but now Jesus has forgiven all my sins. I have left all and taken Him. I want you all to pray for me." This too, was so affecting and so solemn that many were moved to tears; I heard afterwards that Hindus who had come to jeer and give trouble, went away deeply impressed, confessing that the woman was evidently sincere, and that they were resolved not to interfere with her actions. Some of her own friends and relatives were there; their hearts, no doubt, were torn and bleeding, but we heard nothing from them, neither did they give us trouble. God grant that this baptismal service may long live in their memories and bring them to the foot of the cross.

The Missionary who had called during the day with his kind suggestions and advice, said

that in the many years he had been in India, he had not been so moved as in this service.

An eminent missionary and author who was present found one fault in the service, and that was that we did not give enough prominence to Sooboonagam Ammal's social standing, for he knew the family and had esteemed her father as a man of rare ability and culture.

Just before the benediction was pronounced, Mrs. Rudisill, with a few kind and appropriate remarks, in her husband's and in her own name, presented our Sooboonagam a Tamil and a Telugu Bible, at the close asking, "Sooboonagam Ammal do you love Jesus?" To which the reply came so clear, so beautiful in the one English phrase she then knew, "I love Jesus very much," and on receiving the gifts she most affectionately kissed Mrs. Rudisill, and I am sure all hearts were touched by this little scene.

Oh! as Sooboonagam Ammal walks from earth to heaven; may she daily say with David of old, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

The service over, an invitation to the parsonage was accepted by rich and poor, all creeds and no creeds, missionaries and Christian friends, high and low caste Hindus, all of whom together with a few policemen partook of tea kindly provided by Mrs. Rudisill. And I found I was entering the parsonage in company with a Hindu gentleman who had formerly hated and ill-treated me because of the conversion of his friend, Mr. Raju Naidu.

Sooboonagam's conversion and baptism made such a stir that for several Sundays more than three thousand Hindus assembled in a large hall in Madras to discuss the work of the missionaries in their midst and to devise plans to end all missionary work. One of their own leading papers said, "We regret to learn that

one of the daughters of the late Mr. Venkata-ramana Puntulu, has become a convert to Christianity. She is a married woman and her husband is a clerk in the High Court. This is probably the first instance in which in recent days, a married high-caste woman has become a convert, abandoning her home. We heard of the recent conversion long ago, but we thought that better counsel might have prevailed." Another Hindu paper inserted a long editorial on the subject, and as we read these comments we were glad we did nothing in secret, and had a baptismal service open to all.

The proceedings on the part of these Hindus created quite a desire to see the "new convert"; and although it was not time for her to go to them, yet they could come our home, and learn from her lessons of trust in her Saviour. Not a few native Christians came also, and encouraged her faith.

The Missionary who had such fears the day Sooboo was baptized, told me that the service so impressed him that he had little sleep that night as he kept awake till day-break writing a full account of the baptism for the papers in his home-land. In a recent letter he says, "Tell Sooboonagam that she went to Denmark, my country, and did a grand work there, and now has come back to me," meaning that copies of his account had been sent to him. Will our Sooboo go to America through these pages, and do the same good work there?

One young lady who witnessed the baptism, wrote to her home church about it, and told me that the practical outcome was that the church which had been dead to mission work, had resolved to help give the "Gospel to every creature," and had sent her a first donation.

My whole heart is in these pages, and my one desire in writing to-night after a day of

weary toil is that good may grow out of it, God's Name be glorified, and many more souls be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER X.

A Strange Funeral.

WHILE we were rejoicing over this redeemed soul, and while there was "joy in the presence of the angels of God," Sooboo's old home was a scene of sorrow and desolation.

I have heard of many strange things done by the Hindus, but never before of a funeral service performed for one who still lives. This was done for Sooboonagam Ammal within a month after her baptism. Several facts

connected with the ceremonies were given to me by one who was present.

Printed notices were sent to a large number of Brahmans, many of whom attended these ceremonies of which there were over a thousand different kinds all performed by fire, and lasting three days; during this period, the husband had to bathe thirty-one times; nineteen times the first day; eight, the second day; and four, the third day. He had also to spend money very liberally, over a hundred Brahmans being feasted and fed, and cloths given to some.

As a token that Sooboo no longer belonged to them, all the earthenware was brought out and broken; everything that could remind them of her was given away or destroyed.

Then an effigy of our Sooboo was made of reeds brought from the banks of the Ganges and preserved very sacredly by the priests; with some very special and intricate ceremo-

nies the "form" was thrown upon the fire, the priests shouted, "Dead! Dead!" and "Burnt out!" six times, after which the whole company took up the cry, and had the satisfaction of seeing the body or form entirely consumed.

The "Bond" or "Execution Bill" was now signed by three family priests and four highly respected Brahman gentlemen; after this the sacred ashes were gathered together, and as is the custom of all strict, orthodox Brahmans, in order that the eyes of no Sudra or low-caste person should fall on the ashes, they were taken at night to the Brahman burning ground, and after further ceremonies called "Remedy," were deposited among the dead. There to her people lies all that is left of Sooboonagam Ammal; but thank God in His presence she lives, and we daily pray that her words may have fulfillment, "I will yet live, and tell my people of Christ's love." As if to

make these funeral ceremonies absolutely complete, the husband was married again to a very little girl, and has now a second child-wife!

During these ceremonies my heart was very closely drawn to Sooboo for I could not tell her about them; but she knew too well, and told me that she could not sleep; in her dreams she heard the drums, and tom-toms (native music), and her people's cries. One night this poor, lonely, "dead" one heard the music of a funeral procession; she closed her ears and asked so sadly, "Is that for me? Are my people taking me to the burning ground?" She knew that before the month was out all this would be performed for her, and one night before retiring she prayed very earnestly that God would prevent a repetition of the dream she had the night previous; on rising from our knees and enquiring about the dream she replied, "Oh! I dreamt that my mother

and people were crying for me, my mother was beating her breast, and tearing her flesh, and begging me to return. This dream was so painful that I could not help being sad." How natural it was for her to feel so, but how comforting that she could take it all to God in prayer and find in Him refuge and strength.

At this funeral one face was missing; all expected the mother to be there and to sign the "Execution Bill," but she refused to go. Poor mother! Her sorrow was too great to be witnessed by that large company. She sent word that she could not be present, but intended to go on a pilgrimage, and on the banks of the Ganges, to perform her loved daughter's funeral ceremony.

To propitiate the gods, and to make an atonement for her daughter's crime she will most probably end her days there. Imagine that mother on the banks of the Ganges! What privations, what self-denials, what

bathing, what cries, what tears! Because she came to our home and stood with the native servants, she is so defiled, that her only remedy is to go to the sacred river and bathe in its waters. She is now making preparations, and notwithstanding all her wealth, is *begging* money from the strict Brahman community in order to make the ceremony more valid. Every Brahman who gives his mite, however poor he may be, helps her to make the pilgrimage, has a part in the funeral ceremonies, and in the blessings of the gods. It is a great privilege to help her take the journey and perform the sacred rites.

How many weary days will be hers on the lonely way, for the journey is one thousand four hundred and sixteen miles long. She will not enter a railway carriage, but will walk this distance, though, perhaps, when very weary, she may use a slow-going cart drawn by oxen. This pilgrimage must be

accomplished in three months and fourteen days. Alas! How many steps for that poor woman!

The ceremonies will all be performed as she stands for hours, days it may be, in the sacred river. Teachers and priests will be there and will see that nothing is left undone, and of course, will receive bountifully from her. Can you imagine that mother with shaved head (shaved when she became a widow), and bent form trying to propitiate the gods? How sad that her life is to be given as an atonement for her daughter's action.

Sooboonagam Ammal has not ceased to love her mother and is constantly praying for her. Shall we not join our prayers with hers? Who knows but that as she goes on her way, or bends before the idols on the Ganges, the true Light may shine in her heart, and she may be washed in the blood of the Lamb.

Though she has bitterly cursed her daugh-

ter, who is now dead to her, yet there is still the mother's love in her heart. I was much touched when I heard that as she goes about begging money, if she meets any one whom she knows is acquainted with us, she eagerly cries, "Tell me about my Beddah (pet child), my heart yearns for her." But soon on the river banks every particle of her love will be crushed out of her heart by the priests and ceremonies; as she performs her sacred duties, it will be a sin for her to think of her child!

I am here reminded of a very affecting incident. A couple of weeks after her baptism one Sunday morning, I was taking Sooboonagam to church, when to our great astonishment, as we drove into the church compound we came face to face with her grandmother. There she was seated with some of the servants watching for her grandchild; she followed the carriage to the church door, she looked in the window, and with hands and

face uplifted, her lips moved. Whether she muttered imprecations or blessings I know not, but it seemed that she desired one last look, as in all probability she is to go with the mother to the Ganges and will never return to Madras.

Upon one occasion Sooboonagam met her only sister, who at her husband's words, "She is here; now take care, not a word, not a look, put your eyes down," passed her as a stranger, without a word, without a glance. Sooboonagam felt this most keenly for she had thought so often that if they ever met they would talk to each other, and she was continually looking for her sister and hoping for recognition. This was denied her but the precious promise, remains to her, "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

CHAPTER XI.

Conclusion.

MANY inquiries are being made as to how Sooboonagam Ammal's conversion and baptism affects our zenana work. With the loving help of our Heavenly Father we are permitted to carry on a large work here in Madras; of course, all of our more than five hundred zenana women heard of Sooboonagam's step, and we feared that our work among them would, for a time at least, be entirely closed. But God was better than

our fears. True, I received a few letters forbidding us to visit some of our best houses; yet we already had more than we could do, and the hundreds of our dear women were willing still to receive us; so we pushed on with what we had, and even entered some new open doors; and now we have as many houses and women as we ever had. We were very sorry to give up some, still as our workers say, "We have taught these women, they had the Word from us, and we can now well go to those who have not been taught."

Sooboonagam is the topic of conversation in every home; the women want to know all about her, and how glad I am to tell the story over and over again; our many Christian zenana women, secret disciples, are much interested, and applaud her for her courage, and say they wish they could take the same step, and give us every hope that sometime they will come to us; they send messages to Sooboo,

longing to see her, and requesting her prayers. Some ask us what we are going to do with her, and talk of her conversion and coming to us as "her fate!" One woman said, "It was written on her skull before she was born, she had to go that way"!

The workers tell their women that they will sometime see Sooboonagam Ammal, that she will go to them and they will hear from her of the love of Christ and of her love for Him; many are glad, but some shudder at the very thought, saying, "She may talk and talk to me but *I* will *never* hear a word"; and again, "That was her fate, she went that way, why should we go?" Yet I know that Sooboonagam will be a great blessing to our zenanas, and to all our work, as she is now in our home.

She shares my room, sits at our table, eats our food, and is quite an assistant in the home and work. I greatly rejoice that the Woman's

Foreign Missionary Society is providing her support.

Some one indiscreetly remarked to her one day that I ought to get better cloths for her, and called the last one I bought a "grass-cutters' cloth"; Sooboo indignantly replied that if it was good enough for "grass-cutters," it was good enough for her, that she did not come here for grand cloths, and that whatever I thought best to give her she would wear with pleasure. She will not take any money from me for any purpose; thinking that occasionally she would like to give away or buy some little thing for herself, I often insist upon her having some money, but she persistently refuses, and says I may get what I like for her, and do for her as I please, but she must not call any money her own till she *works* for it.

It is wonderful how quickly she has learned our ways, for it is an entirely new life for her. She takes part in all our workers' meetings;

with the other ladies and workers I require her to keep a diary; let me give a few extracts, (translated from the Tamil in which it is written); "26th June 1896: This morning a lady asked me what I was going to do for God. I told her I am very anxious to go into the homes and tell the people about the love of God, and that I want to go into the villages and tell them about the mighty Saviour. This lady said she knew many would listen to me. I then told her that I know God will bless me, and as He told Simon Peter to leave all and follow Him, and He would make him a fisher of men, so He will do for me. The lady kissed me and said she would not forget to pray for me."

17th July, 1896: To-day in my prayers I asked God to bless the zenana sisters. I said I was once like them in darkness and sin, but God sent His children to me and brought me into the light. In the same way I want to

bring others to the feet of my Saviour. I know many would come, but they have not the courage, and are afraid to say that they are the children of God. I pray for them every day, and I know that God will answer my prayer."

20th July, 1896. This morning I was sitting alone thinking of my home, my mother, my sister, and all my loved ones, when I thought, why did I leave all my people and come away? This made me sad; then I thought it must be Satan who is tempting me; so I went down on my knees and asked God to take the thought away. I know it is His hand that brought me here, and that He has done this in love to save my soul."

A missionary on reading parts of this diary remarked, "She very soon acquired the Christian's language." She is learning rapidly, and is grasping at every opportunity to improve. Sooboo takes her turn at family prayer, as all the members of my large family do, and her

petitions are so warm and sincere, we have often remarked to one another when not in her hearing, "What a beautiful prayer!" She sings very nicely at our social gatherings; and at the English Church meetings, our pastor, Dr. Rudisill often asks her to sing, "Come to Jesus;" I eagerly look forward to the time when that sweet voice will be heard in the homes and zenanas of Madras.

Sooboonagam is a member of the Tamil church, but goes with us to both the Tamil and English services. The first communion service in the Tamil Church after her baptism was a puzzle to her. I asked her if she would take the communion, but she desired to wait as she did not understand it; she looked and listened; and when it was over, with a glad smile she said she understood. On asking her if she would take it the following month she replied, "I am ready now." That night the Lord's Supper was administered to the English

congregation; in a whisper I questioned her again, when she said, "I do not know much, but that shows Jesus' death for *me*, and He told us to do it"; then for the first time this once far-away heathen, this idolatress, knelt at the table of our Lord. It was a blessed season to her, and she wept tears which angels rejoiced to see; she has taken the bread and wine regularly since then at the Tamil, and sometimes at our English service.

Sooboo attends the Tamil class meeting held in my home. I will never forget the first time she testified; she manifested timidity and nervousness, as well as much joy; after the meeting was over she put her arms around me remarking, "I only said a few words, but there was so much in my heart, and I am glad God can see it and knows how grateful I am."

She is studying very diligently; you can well understand that a woman who has had but one year's schooling has much to learn.

Although she has begun at the bottom of the ladder, her ambition is great and she sees before her success. As I watch her poring over her books, and recall her former life of ease and luxury, I feel sorry for her, but "I must work the works of Him that sent me," said the Lord Jesus, and this, His child, with His mind in her, has before her His work, she sees the "must," and her one thought is to qualify herself for that whereunto she believes she is called. She is taking now the first year's course in Tamil as prescribed by our Conference; to it I am adding English and Arithmetic. A native teacher instructs her an hour every day; and the ladies, notwithstanding their heavy responsibilities and duties, give Sooboo generously of their time, and teach her vocal music, needlework, English, and the Sabbath School lessons;—may God bless my dear young ladies for their goodness and kindness to Sooboo.

Her only outside work at present is with her class in the Sunday School of poor children. She greatly desires to go into the zenanas, but it is not time yet, and for the good of the work it will be better to wait ; however she loses no opportunity of appealing earnestly to the women who come here to see her to live for the one true God ; she exhorts and argues well, and sings very sweetly to them.

Some women asked her what work she was going to do ; out of the abundance of her heart Sooboo replied, "I am going to be a fisher of men !" These zenana women were amazed at her answer ; "fisher of men !" they cried ; Sooboo explained emphatically, "Don't you know Jesus told His disciples to be fishers of men, and you know these ladies fished me out, so I am going to fish out many for Him."

Sooboo is deeply interested in the zenana work and frequently sends messages to some of the women ; messages from the Bible and

of encouraging words to those who do not see their way clearly to come out and be "separate." She talks much of all that she wants, with His help, to do for Jesus. When letters came forbidding us to enter some houses, she thought we would feel badly, and repeatedly said, "Don't be discouraged, with my Saviour's help, when I go out into the work, I will get more houses for you than you have lost."

Sooboonagam specially requested that we would not change her name at her baptism, and that she be allowed to continue wearing her Brahman costume, "for," she said, "with my own name, my native dress, and my bare feet, I want to go to my heathen sisters and tell them about Christ. If I have another name, they will not know me, but if they hear my name, they will come out to see me, and I will say, 'Don't you know me, don't you know A. L. Venkataramana

Puntulu M.A., B.L.'S, youngest daughter?' and they will receive me gladly, and take me into their houses, and I will tell them I am not changed, I belong to them still, only my heart is changed!"

As my family is a very large one, Sooboo is taught to make herself useful in the home; she has sole charge of my study and office; early in the morning with her own hands she sweeps and dusts; papers, books, and flowers are arranged in beautiful order; I am glad she does not hesitate to do the most menial work in the home; she is very teachable although she has just closed her twentieth year.

One evening while driving past the light-house on the beach, I asked her what lesson she could learn from it; immediately came her answer, "I must be like that light-house, and let my light shine." Since then she repeatedly uses these words in both testimony and prayer. Will you not pray that she may

shine more and more in this dark land? For here she is a worker with our Joseph, who was "Joseph from the pit," but now "Joseph the preacher" doing a good work in "Guilford Avenue" School; with Annie Logan Jacob, once a poor, destitute orphan girl, but now with others of our orphanage a successful worker in our mission field; with Davedasen, once the "Fortune-teller" plying his vocation among hundreds of heathen, but now our "Poet" telling in his lyrics of his conversion and the folly of heathenism; with Elizabeth, the once hard-hearted Elizabeth, who, though having the name of Christian was as far from God as darkness is from light, but now our "Evangelist," whose little daughter, our "Francis Willard" made her consider her ways and was God's instrument in bringing her to His feet; with the last, but not the least, "John the Sudra priest," fifty years of age, whom God sent to us after Sooboonagam

came; a priest, who for thirty years had contended with Christians and was their bitterest enemy; a "god" to the people, and called "Swami" or "Guru" by them; and on coming to my home for the first time many followed him asking if their "Swami" were going. Dr. Rudisill baptized him at our Sunday morning Tamil service; he was then a frightful looking object, but he says, "Jesus had conquered," and as he stood for baptism I washed the hideous "Swami marks" from his brow; and on removing his priestly yellow garment, Mrs. Rudisill gave him a "white robe;" I now have many of his sacred, priestly belongings. He is one of my faithful workers, teaching a school and preaching in the villages, his favorite text being "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." He is one of my principal distributors of tracts; for "Mather Mithiri" (our Tamil "Woman's

Friend") and the tracts which we gave him supplied by our Madras M. E. Publishing House were largely the means of convincing him of the truth. He has brought a number of others to Jesus and to baptism in our church. But time would fail to tell all about him and all these workers who help to swell that Indian host of which our beloved Bishop Thoburn, under God, is the mighty leader.

Sooboonagam Ammal is a sister to my workers, and calls me "Mother;" I pray God that this "light-house," this blessed "magnet" may continue to talk and sing and work for Jesus, and "shine" and "draw" others to her Saviour long after my pen is laid aside, and long after my work day is over.

At the request of many friends personal and official, in America, this story goes forth on its mission to tell of one who says, "I was once a poor sinner; I loved my idols, but I

left all to follow Jesus, and am now here to work for Him," and who loves to sing,

> "Jesus, I my cross have taken,
>   All to leave and follow thee;
> Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
>   Thou, from hence, my all shalt be.
> Perish every fond ambition,
>   All I've sought, and hoped, and known:
> Yet how rich is my condition,
>   God and heaven are still my own!"

To God be all the glory!

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